



## Office of Library and Information Services

One Capitol Hill | Providence, RI 02908 | (401) 574-9300



March 9, 2021

The Honorable Representative Marvin Abney  
Chairman, House Finance Committee  
Rhode Island House of Representatives  
82 Smith Street, Providence, RI 02903

**Re: House Bill No. 5671**

Dear Chairman Abney and Members of the House Committee on Finance:

Thank you and the Committee for providing the Office of Library and Information Services (OLIS) the opportunity to submit comments on House Bill No. 5671.

OLIS supports the legislation, which removes outdated language and updates and clarifies language and certain objectives of Title 29 of state law. OLIS is charged with carrying out the objectives of Title 29.

R.I. Gen. Laws § 29-6-2 and § 29-6-3 includes the formula and eligibility requirements for state aid to public libraries. The specific changes to these sections would eliminate language for adjustments to the state aid formula in 2008 that is no longer relevant. The other change would remove special funding provisions for the Pontiac Free Library in Warwick that were written into the statute prior to the creation of a new program that benefitted that library and other libraries with endowments, which would not have otherwise received state library aid. The Pontiac Free Library and other libraries now receive state library aid based on expenditures from their endowments in an amount proportionate to the amount municipally funded libraries receive, making the special provision for the Pontiac Free Library unnecessary.

R.I. Gen. Laws § 29-6-9 authorizes OLIS to create a statewide network and services to provide Rhode Islanders with equal opportunity to access information resources. The proposed changes to this section, which was enacted in 1989 and last updated in 2011, reflect the advances in telecommunications and library resource-sharing methods that support the network and services.

R.I. Gen. Laws § 29-6-9 also includes requirements for awarding the contract for the statewide reference resource section. OLIS supports changing this from every two years to every five years. The provision to seek requests for proposals for this service was first enacted in 2011; previously the contract was awarded directly to Providence Public Library. The host library for the statewide reference resource center must have considerable technical expertise to execute this statewide contract and a statewide mission; since 2014, Providence Public Library is the only library that has submitted a proposal to provide this service. Expanding the contract period will reduce the burden on the host library and enable it to develop long-term strategies for this service.

The changes proposed in this legislation support the strategic objectives of OLIS and the Department of Administration. Updating the language of this statute will make communication with libraries and the public clearer, clarify government process, and remove outdated and unclear statutory language.

The Office and Department appreciate the opportunity to share their support of this bill. If there are any questions, please feel free to contact my office.



## Office of Library and Information Services

One Capitol Hill | Providence, RI 02908 | (401) 574-9300



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Karen Mellor".

Karen Mellor  
Chief of Library Services  
Office of Library and Information Services  
Department of Administration  
[karen.mellor@olis.ri.gov](mailto:karen.mellor@olis.ri.gov) | 430.9048